



HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORKING GROUP

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NEWS REPORT

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KUALA LUMPUR: Most of the "human trafficking" cases investigated by the police in Malaysia turned out to be people who made their way here, voluntarily, to work.

The women were here largely to work in the sex trade, claimed Assistant Commissioner Sanusi Sidek, the Federal Criminal Investigation Department assistant director attached to the D7 unit.

Human trafficking, vice, gambling and secret societies come under this unit.

Sanusi told the New Sunday Times that two thirds of the 333 women and men investigated so far this year, came to Malaysia on their own accord. They were not forced, coerced or tricked by unscrupulous groups, he added.

The situation, Sanusi said, was not as bad as had been made out by various parties.

Local and international organisations have long reported on the widespread problem of men, women and children being sold into forced labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.

"The women owned up that they were able to earn more money in Malaysia as sex workers than in their own countries. As for the 55 men who were picked up, only three were trafficked here."

He said many foreign women employed in the sex trade "cried wolf" to get away from the clutches of the syndicates they worked for.

Some, he added, made up stories of being trafficked into Malaysia by syndicates when they were picked up in police raids.

"They basically just wanted to go home after having made their money serving in brothels here."

Sanusi said women in the sex trade were required to pay between RM30,000 and RM40,000 each to syndicates for their air tickets, social visit passes/visas and accommodation in Malaysia.

The syndicates would bear the travelling and accommodation costs initially, with the women reimbursing the money after working in brothels.

"In many cases, the women were able to earn between RM2,500 and RM3,000 a night serving at least 10 clients. The money would be taken by the syndicates as reimbursement.

"Many of the women were able to service their debts in one or two months but trouble started when the syndicates kept on demanding money from them.

"Feeling played out and cheated, the women would seek the assistance of non-governmental organisations and the embassies of their respective countries. They never told the truth and would report that they were trafficked into Malaysia."

Under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2007, anyone who is deemed a victim of human trafficking will be given immunity from immigration laws.

"By lying about how they came into the country, these women got free tickets home from their embassies."

Sanusi said, according to police statistics, only 93 women and men had been trafficked into Malaysia so far this year.

Almost all these women who were rescued in raids after tip-offs were found to have been forced into prostitution while the men were on transit to other countries.

The women trafficked into Malaysia were from Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia, with a small number from China and India.

The men were from Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

"What is shocking is that these women were not smuggled in. Many were brought in by syndicates and they had valid travel documents with the Kuala Lumpur International Airport being the main entry point.

"They came in with tourist visas and overstayed in Malaysia."

The police have to date taken 19 traffickers to court and charged them. One had been sentenced to eight years' jail while three others had been given sentences of five months' jail each.

The Attorney-General's Chambers is appealing the cases as it wants them to serve a longer time behind bars.

Four had claimed trial and the others are waiting for their cases to be called up.

"We have also identified the syndicates who have made Malaysia a human-trafficking destination and transit point.

"We are also keeping a close watch on one syndicate involved in taking Malaysian women to Australia to work in the flesh trade."

Currently, the D7 unit has six officers to supervise human-trafficking cases nationwide.

"The Australian federal police will be working with us because they are very concerned about a syndicate which is sending Malaysian women to work in Australia.

"They are also worried about the case of a Chinese citizen entering Australia with a valid Malaysian passport.

"The Australian police learnt that the Chinese woman was not Malaysian after questioning her," said Sanusi.

Police officers from Bukit Aman and Australia had a two-day meeting in August to discuss how both countries could put an end to human trafficking.

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